

Letter to the Editor

Does Periconceptional Multivitamin Use Reduce the Risk of Neural Tube Defects Associated With Other Birth Defects?

To the Editor:

This paper by Khoury et al. [1996] presents some very useful information about vitamin use and NTD multiples. We wish to offer two comments.

1. In our population-based case control study in Western Australia [Bower and Stanley, 1989], we estimated the effect of dietary folate intake for the 13 cases of NTD multiples included in the study, compared with their matched controls. The crude odds ratios (and their 95% confidence intervals) for quartiles 2–4 of free folate compared with the first quartile were 0.28 (0.03, 2.69), 0.25 (0.03, 2.07), and 0.23 (0.03, 1.71). For total folate intake the odds ratios were 1.26 (0.16, 9.81), 0.45 (0.05, 4.01), and 0.67 (0.07, 6.35) for quartiles 2–4 compared with the first quartile of intake. Thus, although based on very small numbers, our study supports a protective effect of folate for NTD multiples, as we suggested in the Discussion of our paper [Bower and Stanley, 1989].

2. In the Discussion of the Khoury et al. paper [1996], a paper written by us is cited [Stanley and Bower, 1992], and the sense of that citation is that our study suggested a protective effect of periconceptional multivitamin/folic acid for several non-NTD defects. How-

ever, the cited paper (incidentally, the order of authors was reversed—the correct order is Bower and Stanley) found *no* evidence of association between dietary folate and non-neural midline defects.

We offer these comments by way of completeness, and in no way do we wish to detract from the careful and important work reported in the paper of Khoury and colleagues.

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